

USAID INSIGHT

June 1 - International Children's Day

MAMA+ Preserves Families for Children

Irina, 28, learned about her HIV-positive status last spring in her fourth month of pregnancy. She received a post-test consultation at a women's health clinic and was informed about the ramifications of carrying the HIV-virus for both herself and her future baby. Since she already had two children, she had been advised to terminate her pregnancy. Having heard that by using anti retroviral (ARV) therapy a mother had a chance to give birth to a healthy child, Irina discussed this option with her husband, and they decided to keep the baby.

Problems started when the baby was born. Ira's husband, unemployed at the time and despondent over the tough financial situation of his family and Ira's diagnosis, began drinking heavily. The family lacked money to buy even the most basic things, like a baby carriage, cloths, and food. Their older children also demanded a lot of care (her seven-year-old son was beginning school at that time). Disheartened and overwhelmed, Irina considered giving the newborn over to

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Father to son chat (Photo: Vadim Nestorov)

Perinatal Technologies Enhance Maternal Instinct

Hanna Kulbyaka had made up her mind not to keep her baby even before she had delivered. She was young and single with no one to help her, and thought that she would not be able to properly care for a child.

Five years ago, most likely no one in the Lutsk Maternity Hospital would have questioned her decision, and the newborn would most likely been sent to a state institution. But such indifferent attitudes by medical personnel have started to change since the USAID-funded *Maternal and Infant Health Project* (MIHP) began implementing effective birthing and child care practices in the Lutsk Maternity, as well as in 22 other Ukrainian maternity hospitals across the country.

MIHP has worked with the Lutsk Maternity to create a leading, high-quality care center in Ukraine, where all staff understand the importance and necessity of acquiring contemporary professional skills, and implementing WHO guidelines

and protocols of care. Since 2003, the maternity has switched from outdated to modern evidence-based practices. A major achievement was substituting separate nurseries and maternal wards with family-

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Bound to be together (Photo: Oleksandr Golubov)

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RELIEF NURSERY HELPS FAMILIES AT RISK



Mykola and Sashko at the backyard (Photo: Tetiana Balkovska)

Sashko, 6, can count, knows the alphabet, and can write his first and last names. But he is eager to learn more and looks forward to going to school this September. Every morning, Sashko's mother, Hanna, takes him to kindergarten. She then returns home to take care of 3-year-old Mykola, Sashko's brother, while her husband Serhiy is at work. Little Mykola enjoys everything from running about to helping his mom with daily chores, to the stories and jokes his older brother tells him when he comes home from the kindergarten.

It's hard to believe that this loving and happy family was once on a list of local vulnerable families. Four months ago, social workers of the Uman Regional Children's Department reported alcohol abuse and child neglect, and considered removing the children from the family. At that time, Serhiy was unemployed, and neither he nor Hanna had parenting skills or positive family experiences as children to fall back on.

When social workers first approached the parents, they were rebuffed.

But with patience and a proper approach, social workers obtained the parent's confidence, helped them to identify their strengths, and gave the family a chance to reevaluate its relationship. While Hanna and Serhiy were developing their parental skills to help foster a positive and nurturing relationship, caregivers put Mykola and Sashko in therapy to enhance each child's potential.

Serhiy, Hanna and their two children, along with six other families from the Uman Rayon, were enrolled in the Relief Nursery, a program for families in difficult life circumstances initiated by USAID's *Families for Children Program* (FCP). For more than two years, FCP has been building a continuum of services aimed at developing family-based care models for orphans and children deprived of parental care including children affected by HIV/AIDS.

Along with foster care and national adoption development, FCP also focuses on preventing child abandonment. *The Relief Nursery* (RN) aims to keep children within their families, while meeting each child's safety and well-being needs. It targets low-income families with children between birth and six years of age who have a history of or who are at risk of physical,

emotional, or sexual abuse or child neglect. The model was introduced 30 years ago in Eugene, Oregon, in the U.S. The three main components of the model include therapeutic early childhood services, home visits and parental education classes. Services provided by RN staff have been acknowledged as highly effective in preventing child abuse and keeping families together. They have been replicated in 10 sites across the U.S.

To help Ukraine reform its child welfare system and focus on a child-centered and family-oriented approach, FCP initiated a project to replicate RN model in its three pilot sites: Uman city and Uman rayon in Cherkasy oblast and Brovary rayon in Kyiv oblast. To develop the RN model in the three program sites, the local social service centers received special purpose grants. The grants covered the cost of remodeling premises, purchasing equipment, furniture, toys, literature and other resources for parents and children, as well as sustaining operational costs for the first six months. Future program activities will be covered by local government budgets.

The Families for Children Program also developed a solid methodological base, as well as provided trainings for staff. Ukrainian specialists received a unique opportunity to visit the U.S. to learn about the RN model in Eugene, and to participate in a series of trainings. In Ukraine, U.S. specialists visited RN replication sites and together with their Ukrainian colleagues conducted trainings for parents, participated in home visits, and advised on the issues of parent education and early childhood development.

A significant role in the successful implementation of the RN model is assigned to the boards of directors formed in each of the three model centers. Board members represent local government, business and clergy, and are responsible for fund-raising and promotion of public-private partnerships, raising public awareness of RN goals, and developing volunteer involvement.

The development and opening of RN centers in Ukraine is a result of close cooperation between local governments, local social service

centers, children and health agencies and the departments of families, youth and sports. A multidisciplinary approach is crucial to the success and sustainability of the model. There is an expectation that the centers will be sustained with support from the State Department for Social Services, which has expressed its intention to support the newly developed centers after the grant projects expire. We anticipate that the model will be adopted and expanded throughout Ukraine.

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Workers are setting a children's room for the Uman Relief Nursery Center (Photo: Natasha Kovalenko)

For more information about USAID-supported *Families for Children Project*, please visit <http://www.familiesforchildren.org.ua>

NEW BUDGET FORESEES MORE CARES ABOUT CHILDREN

Vika, a second grade pupil at Secondary School No. 22 in Pavlohrad, has been fascinated by the sporting accomplishments of the Olympic champion swimmer Yana Klochkova since she was very small.

The girl has set her heart on exceeding the accomplishments of the famous swimmer. Unfortunately, due to an acute respiratory viral infection and bronchitis, the child cannot be properly trained nor regularly visit a swimming pool.

Lung disease among children in the mining town of Pavlohrad has been a problem since Soviet times. Local authorities have always addressed this problem by allocating funds to the health care and education sectors, but the results have been wanting.

Help may finally be on the way in an unlikely manner. USAID's *Municipal Budget Reform in Ukraine* Project supports the implementation of a new budget process for local governments, called the Program Performance Budgeting (PPB) method, which is an alternative to the traditional line item method of budget formulation and provides for the allocation of funds not for organizations or agencies but directly for programs. This has allowed the local administration to develop a comprehensive program entitled

Health Improvement of Children in Schools and to consolidate the efforts of teachers and doctors in finding effective solutions to the problem of lung disease in children.

Thanks to this initiative, in October 2006, a health class was funded Secondary School No. 22 where 19 children from the town's various schools stay for one-month. The health improvement "class" includes three vitamin-enriched meals a day, exercise therapy, physiotherapeutic procedures, salt-mine therapy, massages and oxygen foam treatments.

In addition, four similar classes have been organized for TB-infected children at preschools. Participating children receive preventative treatments to avoid TB infection. They are provided with the necessary vitamins, immune modulators and

special medicinal formulas.

Future plans include opening one more health class in September 2007 for an additional 20 children. Many experts believe that by 2012 the program will help decrease the rate of lung disease in Pavlohrad by 12.5%.

Today young Vika is successfully learning how to improve her health. Later this year, she will be joining the *Olympic Hopes* team, where she will take her first steps towards competing in serious sports competitions.



Vika (left) enjoys oxygen foam treatment in the health class. (Photo: Vitaliy Bondarenko)

Kids Make Their Voices Heard

The Head of the Radivka Village Council had just finished a most unexpected meeting with the youngest members of his constituency. During regular visiting hours the mayor sets aside for citizens, a group of village school children had come to discuss broken sewage pipes near their school. The Village Council Head was so surprised that the children had come to bring the problem to his attention that in merely a few days the pipes were fixed.

This small but illustrative example of children civic activism is rooted in an initiative of Svitlana Slavinska, the Deputy Director of the Radivka Secondary School in Vinnytsia Oblast. Last year, Svitlana participated in USAID's *Community Connection Program* on Youth Advocacy, which was hosted by the North-Central Technical College in Wausau, Wisconsin. While in the U.S., Svitlana was so inspired by the civic education classes she attended and the role they have in both curriculum and extra curricular activities that she decided to begin similar classes at her secondary school.

Upon her return, Svitlana found a partner organization, which provided materials on children's rights, human rights and manuals for school teachers. In the 2006 academic year, she introduced a new elective subject for 10th graders called *I Am a Citizen of Ukraine*. Conducted once a week, the course became very popular among students because it offered students an opportunity to learn how they might participate in local government, ways to protect their rights, and how to be useful in the local community.

While in the U.S., Svitlana also noticed that school children from small American towns had the similar civic programs as their peers from larger cities. Back in Ukraine, she began working closely with schools from the neighboring villages of Napadivka, Komunarivka, Kobylivka and Hushchentsi. She invited village children to attend after-school children's clubs at her school and discovered this initiative to be a huge success. Many children also joined the civic education class.

It was in one such civic activism class that a teacher explained to children how to write an official letter of complaint to a government official. After this class, students from Radivka wrote the letter to their Village Council Head complaining about broken sewage pipes near their school and later went to meet with him.

The ability to successfully solve a local problem proved to be an important experience for these children. On one hand, they realized that the Village Council Head was not some strange person who ignored people's needs. On the other hand, they were able to break a stereotype that children can not accomplish anything serious until they grow up.

After the success of this and several other children's initiatives, Svitlana found support for her extra curriculum activities at the District Education Department, which allocated funds in the local budget to pay teachers for working extra hours in the civic education program. Now, students from 7th to 11th grade are offered the civic education class.

USAID: 15 YEARS OF ASSISTANCE



USAID has addressed the critical needs of orphaned children since 1994. Through its *Community and Humanitarian Assistance Program* it provided over \$9 mln worth of clothing, bedding, furniture and footwear to the 280 orphanages and boarding homes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Social Protection.

Within the framework of the *All-Ukrainian Assistance to Schools Project*, USAID supplied 371,596 meters of high-quality blue, wool-blend cloth, which was sewn into approximately 135,000 school uniforms. The uniforms were given free of charge to the most-needy students in boarding schools, and orphans in secondary and vocational schools.

FAMILY ADJUSTS TO NEW LIFE

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state care as the only way out of her family's predicament. Altered by the situation, the staff of Donetsk City Maternity Hospital #26 called MAMA+ for help.

USAID's MAMA+ Project has been imple-

with their children. Nikolay, Irina's husband, began to accept the HIV-positive status of his wife, and worked on ways to improve the relationship with his wife and enhance his involvement in raising children.



Embraced into the family circle (Photo: Vadim Nestorov)

mented in Ukraine by the Doctors of the World-USA (DOW) since July 2005. Its main goal is to create the capacity and commitment to keep children born to HIV-positive mothers within their biological families. Its multidisciplinary case management teams of psychologists, social workers, lawyers and medical workers work in three project sites Kyiv, Donetsk and Simferopol.

During an initial screening with Irina, a MAMA+ medical worker discussed HIV infection, Irina's past and the baby's life at a state institution. The two also discussed the support and opportunities that MAMA+ could offer to her and her family. After some consideration, Ira agreed to accept help. Meeting people who were sympathetic to her problems raised her confidence in overcoming the difficulties.

A psychologist worked to improve the psycho-emotional atmosphere in the family and, most importantly, establish parents' contact

Much time was devoted to teaching Irina how to communicate and take care of her baby. At the same time, the MAMA+ team helped Irina to apply for state social assistance,

and purchased a baby carriage and basic food and hygienic supplies. In addition, a MAMA+ medical worker visited the family at home and examined the baby on a weekly basis. She also accompanied Irina and her baby to the Donetsk Regional AIDS Center, where physicians concluded that because Irina had taken ARV drugs, there was a good chance that her baby had not been infected with HIV.

After 10 months of MAMA+ assistance, Irina and her family have adjusted to their new life. Nikolay found work as

a security guard. Irina receives state social assistance, which includes nutritional supplies for the baby at a local milk kitchen. Both Irina and Nikolay are now confident that HIV does not mean their lives are at an end, and that they not only can but have to live for their children.

Since July 2005, MAMA+ Project has provided support and kept 206 children born to HIV-positive mothers within their families. Six-hundred-thirty-five HIV-positive women were informed about HIV/AIDS and services available through initial screening. Nine children born and previously abandoned by HIV-positive mothers were successfully reunited with their families. Currently, four peer support groups are offering support to HIV-positive young mothers.

NUMBER OF ABANDONED BABIES DROPS AT MIHP SITES

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friendly post-partum rooms where the mother and baby a long with a companion or relative could be together from the first minutes after birth. The maternity also introduced immediate mother-baby skin-to-skin contact procedures and appropriate counseling on various maternal and child-care issues.

These new approaches have greatly influenced many mothers who had thought of giving away their children. "Often a mother who has made up her mind to abandon her baby right after delivery, begins having second thought after skin-to-skin contact," says Olena Kurak, the Chief neo-natologist of the Lutsk Maternity.

Even if the mother remains firm about leaving the baby, she can not do so while staying at the maternity. Lutsk Maternity personnel, and the staff psychologists in particular, supervise and council the mother on how to take care of the baby. During the stay in the maternity, the mother, not a nurse, feeds the baby, measures its temperature twice daily and changes the child's clothing. Often after three days with her newborn, the mother becomes more confident about her ability to take care of her son or daughter. She has a change of heart, as well as mind.

Hanna is grateful for the MIHP procedures that helped her have a change of heart and decide to keep her son. "I want to express my deepest gratitude to the maternity personnel, who helped me to feel like a real mother. I have kept my baby because with their help I felt confident that I could give my boy the best," says Hanna proudly.

Since the implementation of the Maternal and Infant Health Project in the Lutsk Maternity, the number of abandoned babies has dropped from 15 in 2002 (before MIHP) to four in 2006. At the same time, the number of deliveries has doubled - from 2,000 in 2002 to 4,000 in 2006.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

UKRAINE

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) principal mission in Ukraine is to help the country to complete the transition to a broad-based democracy with a market-oriented economy. USAID assistance focuses on the following areas: **Economic Growth, Democracy and Governance, Health and Social Sector.**

Since 1992, the USAID has provided \$1.6 billion worth of technical and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine to further the processes of democratic development, economic restructuring and social sector reform in the region.

To obtain additional information about USAID programs in Ukraine please visit the USAID website at: <http://ukraine.usaid.gov> or e-mail omyrtyalo@usaid.gov

This story is part of the MAMA+ Photo Album to be launched at the final MAMA+ Project National Conference in June 25-26, 2007 in Kyiv.